

FIVE DRAGONS  
ACUPUNCTURE COLLEGE  
CORRESPONDENCE COURSE



LESSON 2  
OF  
31 LESSONS

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Recommended books to simplify your research are as follows

*Essentials of Chinese Acupuncture*  
*Gray's Anatomy*  
*The Merck Manual*  
*Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*

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MODERN & TRADITIONAL ACUPUNCTURE

LESSON 2

THE TWELVE MERIDIANS

**“The superior doctor prevents  
illness; the mediocre  
doctor cures imminent  
illness; the inferior  
doctor treats actual illness.**

*Old Chinese proverb*

In Chinese acupuncture anatomy, the internal organs of the body are all interconnected with one another by pathways called meridians, which run deep in between the muscles. The concept of these pathways could be compared with Western ideas of the blood vessels and capillaries, however they must not be confused as being the same as the blood vessels. The meridians, unlike the blood vessels which can be seen with the naked eye, are not visible. As well, unlike the blood vessels which function as pathways for the blood, the meridians are pathways in which only energy circulates (Ch'i).

It could be said that the meridians correspond closer to the network of nerves throughout the body, than the blood vessels. Approximately two thirds of the acupuncture points are related to the peripheral nerves and the other one third are only half a centimeter or so away from the nerves.

All in all, there are hundreds of meridians in the body, but in acupuncture we generally consider only 71 meridians in total. The most important and essential ones for the circulation of Ch'i are the twelve main meridians and the two special meridians which we will call 'vessels'. These fourteen will be briefly discussed in this lecture. Later on in the course we will cover the balance of them.

The twelve main meridians to be covered in this lesson, along with their abbreviations, are as follows: The lung meridian (Lu); large intestine meridian (LI); stomach meridian (St); spleen meridian (Sp); heart meridian (He); small intestine meridian (SI); the bladder meridian (Bl); the kidney meridian (Ki); 'envelope of heart' meridian (EH); 'triple burner' meridian (TB); gall-bladder meridian (GB); and the liver meridian (Li).

Two things should be apparent from the above paragraph. Namely, that in the abbreviations of each meridian two letters are used---in the case of a meridian with only one word for its name, the abbreviation uses a capital letter and a small

letter, ie. heart (He). In the case of a two word name, we use two capital letters, ie. large intestine (LI). Secondly, all of the above twelve refer to known organs of the human body and take the name of that organ, except for two: The 'envelope of the heart' meridian, and the 'triple burner' meridian. These two meridians are related to body activity rather than to a specific organ. These will be discussed briefly in this lesson and in full detail in later lessons.

The two special meridians which we call 'vessels' and their abbreviations are: The Governing vessel (Go); and the Conception vessel (Co).

Some meridians run basically in a vertical direction (up and down the body) and others run in a basically horizontal direction (across the body). From now on, we can refer to the twelve main meridians by the Chinese name of 'Ching(s)'. The 'chings' are the VERTICAL pathways of the body of which there are twelve. Usually when a beginner refers to the meridians he means these twelve 'chings', although he may be referring to all pathways, channels, vessels, etc. collectively. When we wish to distinguish the twelve main meridians from any and all other meridians, we may refer to them as the 'chings'.

For every Ching meridian there is a cross-wise pathway or anastomoses (communication or connecting channels) which are called 'Lo' vessels, or more properly the Transversal Lo vessels. The 'Lo' could be considered more or less as the HORIZONTAL or transversal pathways of the Ching meridians.

There are other channels (meridians) that basically follow the pathways of the twelve chings and the two "special" vessels, such as the tendino-muscular meridians and longitudinal vessels (sometimes referred to as longitudinal los). Also included in the total count of seventy-one meridians are seven more special or extra vessels, which have their own pathways and do not generally follow the Chings. All these and the 'Lo' will be covered in the more advanced lessons.

Chings and Lo's are just two components of the entire network through which Ch'i, the body's vital or life energy, is transported and communicated to all other parts of the body. The larger of the two, the Chings, basically run vertically and are connected to each other in a sequence, with smaller branches -- the Lo's -- as the 'connecting' channels.

Together, all of the meridians, vessels and channels spread out through the entire body --- inside and outside, front and back, left and right sides, upper and lower portions. They connect all the tissues and organs of the body and gather it into an organic whole. They regulate normal functioning of the body, and diagnostically can reflect pathological (illness) conditions. Along the Chings are most of the so called acupuncture "points", which are used (through this interconnecting network of pathways) to reach the internal organs of the body for treatment of illness.

The chings, of which there are twelve, are bilateral. This means, they have symmetrical pathways (one on either side of the body) in relation to the median (mid-line) of the body---just as we have a right hand and a left hand. In other words, they are doubled.....for there would be a lung meridian on both the left side of the body and the right side of the body, and similarly with all of the other eleven chings. The acupuncture points, position, pathway, etc. IS THE SAME FOR THE CHINGS ON EACH SIDE OF THE BODY.

All the 12 chings are paired, with duplicates of the channel on each half of the body. However, when we discuss chings, we will speak only of the ching on one side or the other, and refer to them singly to avoid confusion. If we mention the heart ching, you need think of only this meridian on one side of the body. As the other side is identical, it is not necessary to discuss them both.

So, to sum up a little, we have 12 bilateral chings (doubled would make 24). The two special 'vessels' are not bilateral...they are single or unilateral. They follow the midline of the body, one in front and one on the back.

There are several ways in which the Chings can be classified. One way is to classify them into two groups, according to their polarity of Yin and Yang. The Chinese have determined that some of the Chings are predominantly Yin (Yin energy flows in them), and some are predominantly Yang (Yang energy flows in them), in nature, as follows:

YIN CHINGS

Heart (He)  
Liver (Li)  
Spleen (Sp)  
Kidneys (Ki)  
Lungs (Lu)  
Envelope of Heart (EH)

YANG CHINGS

Large Intestine (LI)  
Stomach (St)  
Bladder (Bl)  
Gall-bladder (GB)  
Small Intestine (SI)  
Triple Burner (TB)

Another way of classifying the Chings is based on the main location of the Ching and its terminal point. Six Chings are located on the upper portion of the body (arms) and start or end on the HAND. The other six chings are located on the lower portion of the body (legs) and end or start at the FOOT. Which gives us the following:

HAND CHINGS

Lungs (Lu)  
Large Intestine (LI)  
Heart (He)  
Small Intestine (SI)  
Envelope of Heart (EH)  
Triple Burner (TB)

FOOT CHINGS

Stomach (St)  
Spleen (Sp)  
Bladder (Bl)  
Kidneys (Ki)  
Gall-bladder (GB)  
Liver (Li)

By combining the above two classifications or groupings, we get the following:

	<u>Abbreviations</u>	<u>Pathway</u>
<u>3 Yin Meridians of the Hand</u>	[Lu, He, EH]	Chest to the Hand
<u>3 Yang Meridians of the Hand</u>	[LI, SI, TB]	Hand to the Face
<u>3 Yang Meridians of the Foot</u>	[St, Bl, GB]	Face to the Foot
<u>3 Yin Meridians of the Foot</u>	[Sp, Ki, Li]	Foot to the Chest

NOTE: BEFORE GOING ON TO THE NEXT PAGE be certain that you understand how we arrived at the above classification (other than Pathways). Follow it through in development from Yin/Yang to Hand/Foot group.

As you can see, so far, the Chings have been classified into a dichotomy (subdivision into two groups) according to Yin and Yang, hand and foot. Now we are going to carry all this one step further. We are going to classify the Chings according to the traditional Chinese idea of the cycle of Ch'i within the meridians. The Chinese have determined that the energy flows from one Ching to the next in a continuous and set pattern. It commences with the meridian of the lungs and terminates with that of the liver, only to flow back to the lungs, starting all over again.

This pattern of energy flow is discussed in detail in another lesson. Although one cannot really say that the circulation begins anywhere as it is a continuous uninterrupted cycle, traditionally it follows this order: ...Lungs, large intestine, stomach, spleen, heart, small intestine, bladder, kidneys, envelope of the heart, triple burner, gall-bladder, liver...(and back to the lungs to start a new cycle again). This is the same order as we first introduced them to you on page two, when we gave you the abbreviations.

The Chinese have further grouped the Chings into three categories according to the nature of their state of Yin or state of Yang. They have determined that some of the Yin meridians are more active or passive than others, in set phases, and similarly with the Yang meridians. The three groupings from active to less active (passive) are: Maximum phase, equilibrium phase, minimum phase. This can be tabulated as follows, and will be explained in later lessons.

<u>PHASE</u>	<u>YIN CHINGS</u>	<u>YANG CHINGS</u>
HAND MAXIMUM	Lung	Small Intestine
HAND EQUILIBRIUM	Envelope of Heart	Large Intestine
HAND MINIMUM	Heart	Triple Burner
FOOT MAXIMUM	Spleen	Bladder
FOOT EQUILIBRIUM	Liver	Stomach
FOOT MINIMUM	Kidney	Gall-bladder



Finally, we are going to put everything together---all of the preceding classifications. We arrive at one which denotes the nature of the Chings in greater detail. This is the classical Chinese arrangement and terminology of the twelve Chings. This order and wording must be memorized! What we have done in a few pages is un-complicate the matter and give you the best possible classification of the Chings to learn, instead of many classifications and groupings.

THE TWELVE CHINGS IN CLASSICAL ARRANGEMENT AND TERMINOLOGY

1. Hand yin maximum lung meridian (Lu)
2. Hand yang in equilibrium large intestine meridian (LI)
3. Foot yang in equilibrium stomach meridian (St)
4. Foot yin maximum spleen meridian (Sp)
5. Hand yin minimum heart meridian (He)
6. Hand yang maximum small intestine meridian (SI)
7. Foot yang maximum bladder meridian (Bl)
8. Foot yin minimum kidney meridian (Ki)
9. Hand yin in equilibrium envelope of heart meridian (EH)
10. Hand yang minimum triple burner meridian (TB)
11. Foot yang minimum gall-bladder meridian (GB)
12. Foot yin in equilibrium liver meridian (Li)

Because of their importance in energy and therapeutics, and as they possess their own acupuncture points as do the Chings, the two special Vessel meridians are usually included at the bottom of the listing of the twelve Chings. (Sometimes this is all referred to as the fourteen meridians).

13. The Governing Vessel [back median line of body] (Go)
14. The Conception Vessel [front median line of body] (Co)

Knowledge of the Chings far outweighs an exact understanding of the function of the organs as we know them in Western medical thought, as far as day-to-day practice of acupuncture is concerned. The meridians are connected with, and have their origin in, the internal organs and treating them produces an effect on the organs they represent. Since the acupuncturist is unable to reach the vital organs with his needles (or what have you), he relies completely on the acupuncture points along the meridians to practice medicine.

The whole foundation of acupuncture rests upon this relationship that exists between a specific area on the surface of the skin and a particular organ or function. The needles or stimulus act directly upon the meridian, which in turn affects its particular organ, etc. The more one can respect the classic meridian rules of acupuncture, the better will be the results, and within the 12 chings and the two special vessels lies almost the whole secret of acupuncture cures.

The series of acupuncture points upon the skin, which constitutes the outward 'tracing' of the meridian, is about the only evidence we have of their existence. The meridians are invisible---dissection cannot reveal them, and it is difficult to explain the exact relationship which exists between a meridian and its corresponding organ. Possibly the autonomic nervous system and reflexes within that system enters into consideration here though, as well as some type of electrical or electromagnetic mechanism in or around the body.

The meridians, in summary then, provide communications lines between external and internal, and upper and lower parts of the body, for the ch'i energy. They do not govern the body's functions, but they carry Ch'i, and so contribute to the living human being. This energy can be manipulated at stations along these communications lines---the acupuncture points along the meridians. (Please remember though that Ch'i energy is in the whole body, not just in the meridians.)

GENERAL PATHWAYS OF THE MERIDIANS (CHINGS)

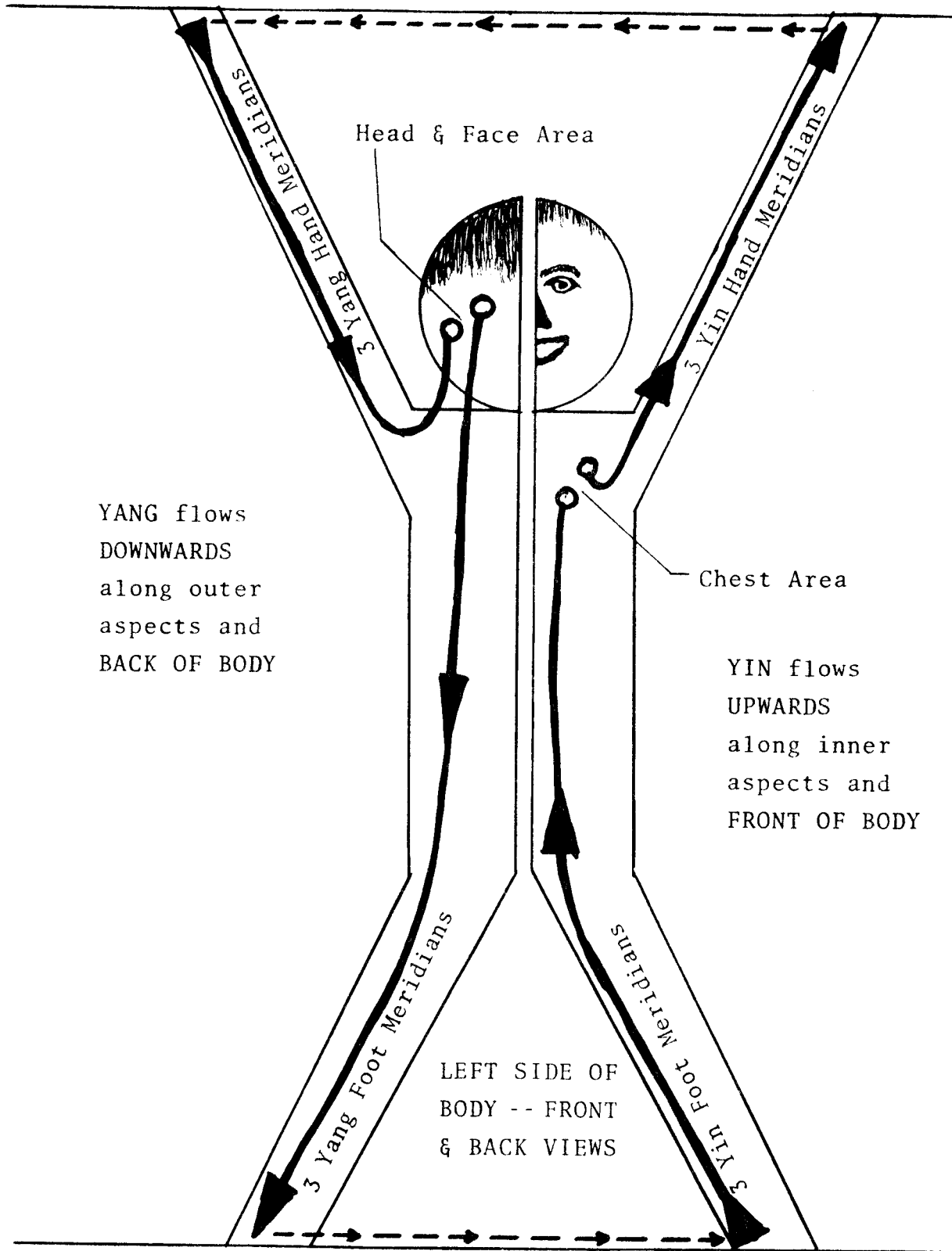
The circulating pathways of the twelve chings flow from the face to the feet, from the feet to the chest, from the chest into the hands, and from the hands back to the face. The Yang chings generally flow along the outward (lateral) side of the limbs and along the back of the body. The Yin chings pass along the inward (medial) side of the limbs and along the front of the body. It has already been mentioned that the pathways leading to or from the arms are called Hand chings, and those that descend to the legs or ascend from the legs are the Foot chings.

The three Yin hand meridians travel from chest to hand and the three Yang hand meridians, from hand to head (face). The three Yang foot meridians travel from head to foot, and the three Yin foot meridians travel from foot to chest. This forms a complete energy-cycle over the entire body and gives the necessary pathways for the flow of the ch'i energy.

Therefore, with arms high above your head (palms facing each other), the three Yin Hand chings (lung, heart, and envelope of the heart) will be flowing Yin energy from the chest up along the inward side of the arm to its extremities. Then, the three Yang Hand chings (large intestine, small intestine and the triple burner) will be taking Yang energy from the tips of the fingers, basically down along the outward side of the arm to the head or face. (See next page)

From the head, the three Yang chings of the Foot (stomach, bladder and gall-bladder) will be taking Yang energy down along the side or back of the body and outward side of the leg to its extremities. Then, to complete the cycle, the three Yin chings of the Foot (spleen, liver, and kidney) will be taking Yin energy from the toes up along the inward side of the leg, up along the front of the abdomen and back up to the chest---which in turn flows towards the hand again. A few exceptions exist in this overly simplified description however, but the main concept is sound.

MAN IS BETWEEN HEAVEN (YANG) AND EARTH (YIN)



WITH HANDS ABOVE HEAD: YIN MERIDIANS FLOW FROM EARTH UPWARDS  
 YANG MERIDIANS FLOW FROM HEAVEN DOWNWARDS

In addition, there is a pathway which travels along the very middle of the back and along the spine, from about the anus, over the top of the head and to the mouth. It has no direct connections to any internal organ. Its energy flow is Yang and ascends from the bottom of the pathway to the top. It is called the Governing Vessel (Go), and is a special meridian.

As well, we have a similar pathway travelling up the middle line in front of the body called the Conception Vessel (Co). It runs from about the anus to the mouth, and its energy is Yin, ascending from the bottom to the top as well, like the Governing Vessel. In effect, these two meridians vertically encircle the body down its midline, front and back.

These two are unilateral, not bi-lateral. They do not form a direct part of the organ meridian's energy circulation network, nor are they associated with any one organ. They actually belong to a group of eight special vessels which we will be studying in a later lesson. As energy does circulate within the Go and the Co, constantly in a prescribed direction, and as they have their own acupuncture points, we have mentioned them in this lesson.

Earlier, we mentioned two of the twelve main chings, the Envelope of the Heart ching and the Triple Burner ching, as being related to body activity rather than a specific internal organ of the body. The Triple Burner is a functional concept associated with the utilization and transferring of energy, controlling respiration and digestion, and the distribution of energy to the uro-genital organs. It is only through the involvement of the Triple Burner that the human organism can absorb and transfer the vital energy necessary to life, according to Chinese medical thought.

The envelope of the heart, often referred to as the heart constrictor, circulation-sex or pericardium by other authors, is also a functional concept. It is involved in

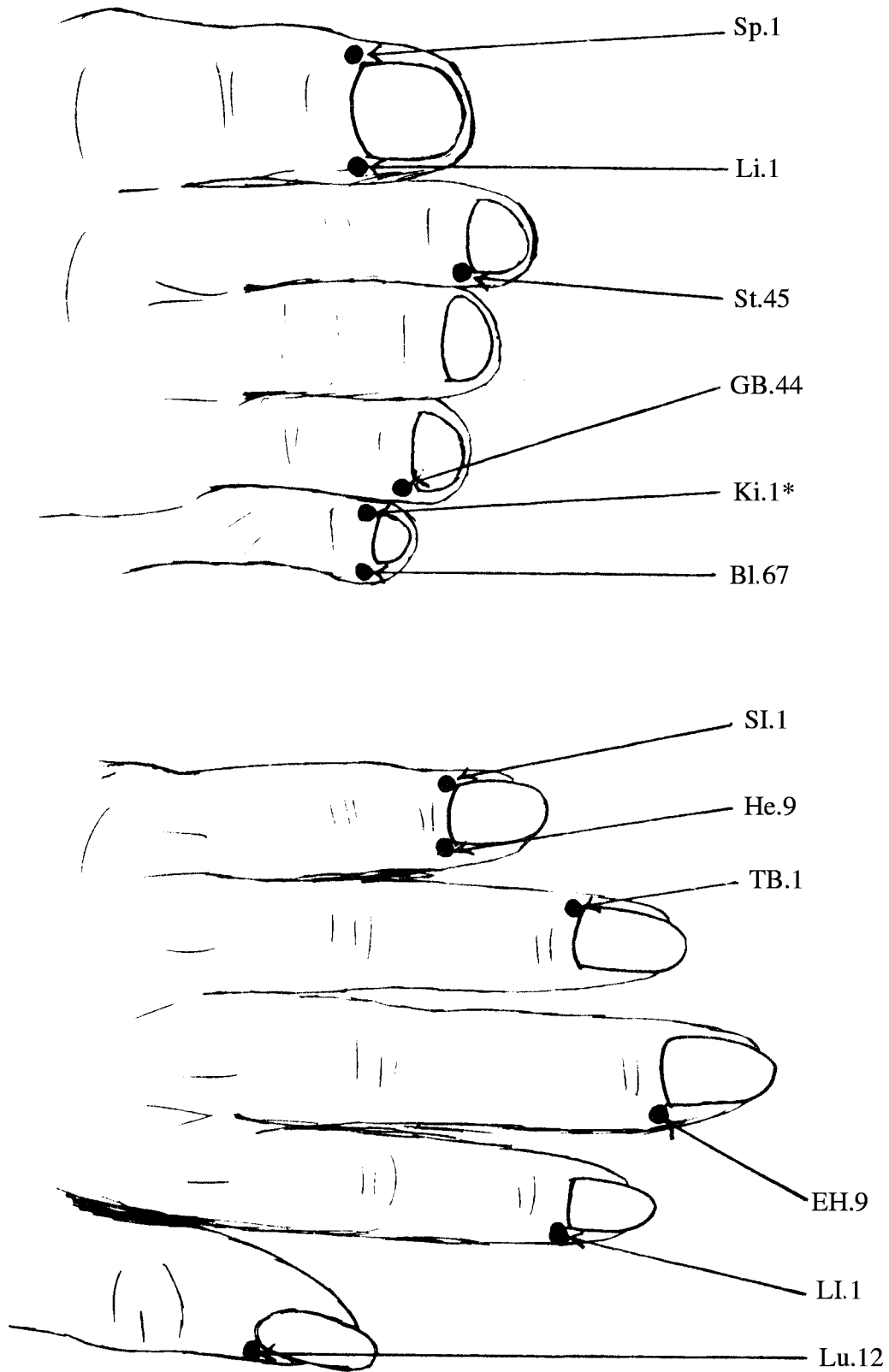
protection and control of heart action, blood circulation, mental and reproductive processes. Both of these things will be covered in their own lesson, later on in the course.

You may have noticed from our discussion of the general pathways of the meridians on page 9 of this lesson that the cycle of circulation in the organ ching system changes polarity in certain places. The energy travelling from the chest to the finger tip is predominantly YIN energy. Yet on its way back up the other side of the arm, it becomes YANG energy. The energy changes polarity, namely from Yin to Yang, or from Yang to Yin, at the extremities of the upper and lower limbs.

Here is what is happening: The energy travelling from the chest to the finger tip is predominantly Yin energy, but as the energy approaches the extremity the polarity begins to change, and by the time the tip of the finger is reached the Yin dominance is extinguished and Yang dominance begins. Energy travelling from the finger tips to the head or face and from the face to the toes is predominantly Yang energy. As this Yang energy approaches the lower extremities of the leg, the polarity begins to change again. By the time the toes are reached the Yang dominance is extinguished and on the return from the toes to the chest, the Yin energy again dominates. This Yin energy then flows back into the arms, to start the whole cycle over again.

In the central area, head and chest, even though the energy passes from one ching to another ching, there is no polarity change. Remember that in this cycle, the energy travels through twelve different chings, in the order as outlined on page 6, paragraph 2, and page seven of this lesson.

The polarity change is not just a sudden thing, but occurs gradually, mostly between the elbow and the finger tips, and between the knee and the toes. Therapeutically, it is at points below the knee and below the elbow that energy polarity changes can be most easily accelerated or retarded. Within these limits, the most important control or command acupuncture points are found.



FIRST AND LAST POINTS ON HANDS AND FEET

\*This is a special test point. Kidney Ching First Point is actually located under the foot.

On acupuncture charts, the meridians appear as thin surface lines connecting a series of dots which represent the acupuncture points. Actually, there is much more to each meridian than what is shown on most acupuncture charts and diagrams. Every ching has an inner pathway and an outer pathway, and it is only the outer pathway with its acupuncture points that is shown on most charts or drawings.

The true extent of the chings cannot be shown by lines on a two-dimensional drawing, and this is one reason why we do not include such charts with these preliminary lessons. They would actually be misleading to the beginner. On a drawing the lines show us only which acupuncture points go together to form a particular meridian. According to the Chinese, each ching is connected to all the tissues, organs and functions over which its acupuncture points have an influence or produce an effect, whether in the immediate area of the points, or at a much distant area.

Take for example the heart meridian with nine acupuncture points running from the armpit down the inner surface of the arm to the tip of the little finger, very close to the surface. This much is shown on standard meridian charts and most diagrams. However, the heart meridian naturally must be connected to the heart somehow, so it extends internally from the armpit point to the heart itself. But, the heart meridian also has several other branches deep inside the body. One runs to the small intestine, and another branch connects to the eye and head. [See next lesson]

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*We hope you have enjoyed the first two lessons of this course and found them challenging and satisfying. By now, you should have mailed lesson one's question papers in to the Institute for marking and grading. When you send in the question papers for this lesson, it is time for you to consider ordering the next set of lessons (4 & 5). They will be sent by First Class Mail and should be back to you by the time you've completed studying lesson three so you will not be without study materials. Simply fill in the order blank at the very bottom of one of each lesson's question papers and attach your check or money order to it.*

*The Institute*



Various authors use different names, terms and abbreviations than those we use in this course. No one system of acupuncture nomenclature has yet been adopted on an international basis. Because of this, and having to make a firm decision, we have chosen to adopt the most widely accepted North American nomenclature system, for this course. Some of the European authorities writing in the English language are starting to use it as well, so it may become the Western 'standard English system' in the near future.

Many students have mentioned that they would like more drawings and diagrams in the early lessons. We are trying to encourage the students to learn to comprehend verbally, instead of pictorially. This is because much of the advanced knowledge of acupuncture is abstract and of such a nature that it cannot be 'diagrammed'. Wherever possible though, or essential for absolute clarity, diagrams, etc. are used.

As you will see from the next lesson, we start out by presenting the meridians one at a time, step-by-step, rather than 'swamping' the student with the entire overall meridian complex. Then, we start putting it all back together in larger sections, limb by limb (the three Yin Hand meridians, and so on). Then, finally the complete body meridian structure. Large wall charts of the entire meridian system are supplied with the course only when we have covered all the meridians and sections in detail.

The student should be warned that the answers to the questions at the end of each lesson are usually not given directly in the lesson material. We do not use the simple true-and-false or typical fill-in-the-blank type questions. Nor do we use 'trick' questions. The student must "dig" for the answers by actually LEARNING the material thoroughly, THINKING, and CORRELATING it in his own mind. Lesson marks and grades generally correspond well to practical ability and knowledge. Those of you who have taken several "home-study" courses will appreciate this. Those who haven't, are in for a real 'treat'---a truly satisfying learning experience.